

1609 / 5631.

TO
EVERY MODERATE MAN
IN
I R E L A N D,



TO
EVERY MODERATE MAN
IN
I R E L A N D;
THE FOLLOWING IDEAS
ON
THE RELATIVE SITUATION
OF
P R O T E S T A N T S
AND
C A T H O L I C S,
ARE
S U B M I T T E D.

S O L D B Y
W H I T E,
80, DAME-STREET.
1792.

1609 | 5631.



THE
PROTESTANT INTEREST
IN
IRELAND
ASCERTAINED, &c. &c.

IN the present enlightened, and enlightening period of society, to argue in favour of any thing old, or established, is to undertake a task, if not of danger, at least, of odium.—The same disadvantage, may, probably, be expected to attend any opposition to the encreasing spirit of reforming innovation. Every day, has its peculiar fashion of sentiment, as well as of dress, which, to resist, requires in any individual, some effort of resolution.

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The new fangled affectation of the present times, consists briefly in a thorough contempt for the barbarous ignorance of all past ages, and a self-sufficient confidence in the omnipotence of the wisdom of our own. The inconclusive futility of experience, the Gothic blindness of former days, the happy illumination of the present; universal unrestricted liberty, toleration, and the rights of man, form the short vocabulary of modern political tuition.

The conciseness, irresistible efficacy, and obvious simplicity of this brief, and as it were, magical incantation, adapt it to all capacities, and render it of general use. It becomes a charm, before which, every superstitious phantom of reason, and of experience, must instantly vanish. The most rooted structure of government, the oldest monument of political wisdom, cannot for a moment stand its explosive fury. These new doctrines, started by interested would-be legislators, preached from pulpits by certain divines, and diligently diffused by their lay sectaries, are admirably adapted for vulgar reception. They speak to the interest and the passions of the lowest in the community, without troubling their understandings. They require no process of reasoning to comprehend, and furnish at once a ready answer to the most elaborate arguments, which infringe upon them. It is no wonder, then, that this little lesson, which



which requires but to be got by heart, should be ever ready in the mouths of those, who are unable, or unwilling, to learn any thing more difficult;—indeed, according to their present progress, it would be matter of little surprize, if these political dogmas were to be shortly made a part of the common school education, and if the next generation of our children, were to be trained, as soon as they had left their cradles, to lisp forth, along with their *as in presenti*, the doctrine of the *Rights of Man*.

Availing themselves of this cant of the times, the Roman Catholics of this country, or at least, by far the majority of them, have thought proper to take this favourable opportunity of coming forward, to claim a removal of their disabilities. And with those who decide all questions of state by the criterion of the rights of man, the matter will not admit of the least hesitation. To those, however, who are able and willing seriously to reflect, to those who think the science of politics a matter of reasoning, and not a theme for declamation; the following thoughts on the present question concerning the Catholics, are, submitted. Their object is in some sort, to methodize, and place the matter in issue, in its proper point of view; and the plan, which they will endeavour to pursue, will be, brevity as far as possible, and some little precision.

Previous to an investigation of the propriety of the present claim of the Roman Catholics, it is necessary to ascertain what their claims are. This may appear an obvious matter; [but it is one, which, nevertheless, I fear is not in general sufficiently attended to, and one, which I apprehend, will, on consideration, be found to contain more than is commonly thought. Were the parties, in all controversies, to set out with a definite, and open statement of their sentiments, the merits, would, I believe, seldom be difficult of discovery. But concealment is sometimes politic. In the present case, I do not any where find, any express, accurate statement of grievances, from any authorised body of the Roman Catholics; nor any definite demand of an increase of privileges, *when, and to what degree*. All that we have, is a kind of general complaint, a general demand of relief. This indeterminate ambiguity, may, perhaps, be best for their purpose; perhaps, too explicit a statement of their desires, might not be so adviseable. But this vague method lays under a considerable disadvantage those who would argue against them. To obviate this, as far as lies in my power, and at the same time, to proceed with the greatest fairness, I shall endeavour as well as I can, to collect and concentrate their several demands.

And, before I proceed further, it may be proper to declare that what has been said, does not
 apply

apply universally to all the Catholics in the kingdom.

Some of them have come forward with an explicit, and a moderate statement of their wishes and views. By far the majority, however, in number, if not in respectability, it is said, are of a different opinion, and by the most marked disapprobation of the proceedings of the other portion, have declared themselves of principles much less moderate. This internal division, does not, it must be confessed, at the first blush, shew very favourably to the cause itself. But even the dissent of the most respectable of their own community, shall not be taken as a decisive conclusion against them. Let us examine their principles on their own merits.

Their sentiments, (I mean, those of the bulk of their people,) have, I understand, been deposited in the breasts of certain delegates, deputed by the body at large, and forming a kind of club, under the title of the Catholic Society. This being the only body apparently constituted by authority from them, is the only one of whose proceedings we are warranted to take cognizance. The sentiments of this society, are, I presume, to be found in a Declaration, published by them, and signed by their secretary, one Theobald McKenna. This declaration, it
must

must be confess'd, is extremely well adapted for its purposes, and contains the whole strength of their case. It is written with spirit, yet with caution. But it is extremely indefinite; 'tis true, no person of common discernment, can read it through, and not see its general tendency; but the particular design, and the entire extent of it, are artfully glossed over, and may well escape a superficial observer. It contains a shewy kind of display of grievances, and a pathetic application to the feelings, but not one sentence, stating with precision, their demands. This is, exactly, according to their policy. It is necessary, the general doctrine should have softened the hearts, and prepared the minds of men, before they enter into an explicit statement. What they have omitted, however, I shall, endeavour to collect from different sentences of their declaration, as well as from the *tout ensemble* of their proceedings. If I shall misquote, or mutilate, the declaration is in the hands of every one, and I am open to detection. If I conclude falsely from it, it will not be difficult to refute me.

The declaration, after an introductory panegyric on their own very laudable conduct, in not proving downright rebels, states, that “ a number of Roman Catholics, “ resident in Dublin, have formed themselves into a “ society, which they invite their fellow sufferers through “ the nation to unite with, which shall have for its object,
“ to

“ to consider, and individually, to support, *with all*
 “ *their zeal*, and personal influence, such measures not
 “ inconsistent with their duty to the civil magistrate,
 “ as shall appear likely to relieve them, *from the oppressions*
 “ *and disqualifications imposed in this country, on persons*
 “ *professing the Roman Catholic Religion.* We do there-
 “ fore unanimously resolve,

“ That we will, to the utmost of our power, en-
 “ deavour, by all legal, and constitutional means, to
 “ procure *the repeal of the laws by which we are*
 “ *aggrieved, as Roman Catholics.* That we will promote
 “ repeated applications to every branch of the legislature
 “ *for that purpose* ; and assist such applications by all
 “ means of legal influence, which it shall *at any time*,
 be possible for us to exert ;” A little farther on, they
 say, “ we desire only, that property in our hands may
 “ have its *due* weight ; and merit in our children, its
 “ *rational* encouragement.”

And “ again, we solicit, *a share of interest* in the
 “ existence of the commons.”

And near the end, “ we will endeavour, by tem-
 “ perate, unremitting assiduity, to procure *the benefit of*
 “ *that constitution*, which, of all our fellow subjects, is
 “ denied alone to those of our persuasion.”

These

These are the only express declarations of their demands, or of their sentiments, which I can meet with ; how indeterminate these are, must strike every reader. But something may be collected from other passages. The enumeration of their grievances and disabilities, necessarily includes a desire of their removal. Concerning these, they say, “ the *whole legislative*, the *whole executive*, “ the *whole judicial power of the state*, is in the hands of “ men, over whom they have no controul, and with “ whom they can have little intercourse. They are “ prohibited to engage in any mode of industry, from “ which it is possible to debar them, or which is worth “ the monopoly. They are restricted in the education “ of their children.”

Afterwards, “ they have the bustle and cumbersome “ forms, *without the advantage of liberty*. The octennial “ period, at which the delegated trust of legislation is “ revoked, and his importance restored to the constituent, returns but to disturb their tranquillity, and “ *revive the recollection of their debasement*. All the “ activity, all the popular arts of electioneering canvas, “ *enforce the idea of their insignificance* ; they exemplify “ it too. Witness the various preferences given by “ persons of rank, to, not always the most deserving, “ among our protestant countrymen, a preference nearly “ as fatal to the independent protestant interest, as “ to us.”

And

And in the next sentence, "there exists not, on their behalf, *any controul over power.*"

To these extracts, I shall add one more, where using a sort of argument, in favour of their demands, they say "it is the interest of every man in Ireland, *that the entire code should be abolished.*"

These are all, or at least, the principal passages in their declaration, which either directly declare their wishes and designs, or from whence they can be fairly inferred. Let us see then, what these passages say; and first, I cannot but remark the ambiguity of them. The two first, indeed, in general terms, declare that they will do all in their power, to relieve themselves from the disqualifications under which they labour, and to procure a repeal of the laws by which they are aggrieved, as Roman Catholics.

But what these disqualifications are, which they wish to remove, or which are those laws, by which they are aggrieved, they leave to us to discover. These, indeed, we may perhaps, without much difficulty, light upon. But when they claim *due* weight for their property, and *rational* encouragement for their children's merit; it is indeed, difficult for us to conjecture, what proportion of weight, or encouragement, may appear *due* or *rational*,

in their eyes. In the same uncertainty are we left, when they claim a *share in the interest of the commons*, and the *benefit of our constitution*. To these demands, it is natural to ask, what *share*, what *degree* of benefit is required? What they, however, have either not ventured, or not condescended to express, I shall endeavour to ascertain.

These several passages, altogether, and each almost separately, go to establish, nearly in their own words, this position; “*that they will at all times, use all their power, and all the influence they possibly can exert, to procure the removal of their disqualifications, and the repeal of the laws, by which they are aggrieved, as Roman Catholics.*”

These are their own words. I cannot therefore be accused of misrepresentation. 'Tis true, they are careful to subjoin a qualification to this, by way of salvo; “*that the influence they use shall be legal, that their conduct shall be consistent with their duty to the civil magistrate.*” But what reliance can be placed on this, or how it can be made at all to consist with any effectual endeavours to obtain the objects of their wishes, I shall have occasion hereafter to consider. Assuming it, however, for the present, as a qualification to the above stated position, let us, to pursue our system, next see what

what are those disqualifications, and those laws, which they wish to remove.

The expressions they use, are without any limitation, or restriction whatsoever. They cannot therefore, be otherwise understood than as applying to *every* law of the land, and *every* establishment of our constitution, “*by which they are aggrieved, as Roman Catholics.*” All these, they will endeavour to *repeal*, and *remove*. These are still their own words. Of these *aggrieving laws*, they give us a very slight enumeration. A more copious one, they profess, to think, would be tedious and disgusting, and I will venture to add, what they thought proper to suppress, it would also prove inimical to their cause. For, as their exertions of abrogation, and *repeal*, must be commensurate to the extent of their *grievances*, an enumeration of the one could not but detect the projected length of the other. As it is material, however, to the purpose, and, as the question cannot, possibly, be fairly decided without it, I shall beg the reader's pardon, for so disgusting a recital, and request him, for a moment to lay aside his feelings, whilst I attempt a cursory enumeration of the disqualifications, and grievances, imposed on papists, by the several laws or institutions of our constitution. And, in doing this, I must claim the merit of acting most fairly by their cause, for if their claims be just, what can be more favourable to them, than to shew

their grounds: if their grievances be deserving of removal, what can they desire better than to have them made known. I shall even, for the present, take the several penal laws, most strongly against my own argument, as they exist in our statute books, not as they operate in fact. It is notorious to every man in the kingdom, that the greatest part of them, have long been mere *dead letters*, and as little in force, as if they had been actually repealed. But to concede every thing that can be demanded, and as I know it will be again repeated here, that though they *have* not been in *general* enforced, there is no security, that they *may not* in *future*. I shall state them as they are on paper.

They are prohibited,

By Act 7 Will. 3. Cap. 4. From sending their children abroad for education, or money for that purpose.

By Act 7 Will. 3. Cap. 5. From keeping arms, and a power given to search for them. This is confirmed by the subsequent Act 13 Geo. 2. Cap. 6.

By Act 9 Will. 3. Cap. 26. Popish Bishops or Priests, may not practice, or be harboured. Additional penalties to the same effect, are laid on by Act 2 Anne, Cap. 3.

By

By Act 1 Ann. Cap. 32. Those who do not take the oaths and subscribe the declaration, cannot take any of the forfeited estates.

By Act 2 Ann. Cap. 6. Sect. 1. Perverting Protestants is made a premunire.

Sect. 8. They cannot take by descent, nor purchase for more than 31 years, and their estates are made to gavel. But this is altered by the subsequent Act 17 & 18 Geo. 3.

Sect. 25. They cannot vote at elections, nor by Sect. 26. present to advowsons.

By Act 1 Geo. 2. Cap. 20. They cannot be Barristers, Attornies, &c.

By Act 7 Geo. 2. Cap. 6. None whose Wife is a Papist, can act as Justice of the Peace.

By Act 11 & 12 Geo. 3. Cap. 27. A maintenance is provided for all Popish Priests, who become converted. This is continued by several subsequent statutes.

By Act 17 & 18 Geo. 3. Cap. 49. After reciting the disabilities under which Papists lay by former statutes,

tutes, it is declared that it is expedient to relax them, and they are hereby enabled to take leases for 999 years certain, or any number determinable on lives, not exceeding 5. Their lands are made deviseable, descendible or transferable, as if in feizin of any other.

By Act 21 & 22 Geo. 3. Cap. 24. All persons taking the oath prescribed by 13 & 14 Geo. 3. Cap. 35. may take any interest in lands, (except advowsons, and manors, or boroughs, *entitling to vote at elections,*) and these are made descendible, transferable, &c. All Priests also, taking this oath, are relieved from their penalties.

By this statute also, several former statutes are repealed.

To this list, must be added, the law establishing the test and qualification oaths, by which all persons are obliged to take the oaths of allegiance, supremacy and abjuration, and to subscribe the declaration against popery, before they can be admitted to any office or employment, or vote as members of the legislature.

I have given the heads of every statute of consequence against them, which exists *unrepealed*; and I have given them,

them, without any of the qualifying or alleviating circumstances which attend many of them. If any one is desirous of more particular information, it may easily be had, either in the statutes at large, or the abridgment thereof.

Concerning this black, and indeed, disgusting catalogue of disabilities and penalties, I shall only, for the present, remark, that there is no man, I am certain, who reads them, but is conscious of the total disuse, and inoperation of most of them, for several years past. I doubt even, whether any persons, except those whose occupation leads them to the study of our laws, are aware, or could easily be persuaded of their existence. But on this head, I must request the reader to suspend his judgment, till I come, shortly, to touch somewhat more upon it. My present purpose is, to ascertain what those aggrieving laws are, which the Catholics seek to repeal.

The list I have given, may be somewhat simplified and methodized. The disabilities of Papists, as above enumerated, may be reduced to four heads.

First, Those, which obstruct them in the *exercise* of their religion.

Secondly,

Secondly, Those, by which they are restricted in the education of their children.

Thirdly, Those, which oppose them in the full acquisition of property. And,

Fourthly, Those, by which they are excluded from all public offices.

Under which last head, I include their exclusion from the profession of the law, the army and navy, from all city, county and corporate offices, from all places and employments of state, or under government, from voting at elections, and from sitting as members of the legislature.

All these disabilities, they are, by their incorporation, and their solemn compact to each other, bound, with every exertion of influence and power, which it shall be at any time, possible for them to use, to endeavour to remove. If this be not the meaning of their declaration, then must I confess myself, incapable of understanding the sense, which the plainest words in our language, convey. They have bound themselves, to endeavour to procure a repeal of all the laws, by which they are aggrieved, as Roman Catholics. For, as they state the general proposition, without any restriction, it cannot be

be taken with any. Now, what are the laws by which they are aggrieved, as Roman Catholics. Certainly they are those which have been stated above, in short, all those laws and usages, which place them under greater disadvantages than the Protestant inhabitants of the kingdom. For if, to be under a greater disadvantage than others, on account of their religion, be not, to be so far *aggrieved as Roman Catholics*; and if, the laws and usages mentioned, do not place them under those disadvantages, then I know not what grievances are, nor what can produce grievances. The inevitable consequence is, that they are bound *at all times*, to endeavour to procure the abolition of the laws and usages mentioned.

To this, there is yet one necessary addition. They are taxed for the support, and obliged to contribute to the maintenance of an established government, and church, in which they have no share. There certainly must be, according to their idea, another *grievance*, under which they labour as *Roman Catholics*. Of this, therefore, they are also bound, according to their system, to *endeavour to procure the abolition*. And as the expression they use, "*at all times*," must necessarily include the present time, and as, wherever any grievance exists, the sooner it is removed, the better, it follows unavoidably, that the object of their *present* application, must be, to procure, if possible, a *repeal* of all the grievances mentioned at once.

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I have,

I have, now, arrived at what I consider the meaning of their declaration, and have endeavoured to ascertain with somewhat more accuracy than they have done, what the objects of their demands are. If I have wronged their meaning, or their intentions, they know how to correct me. When they give us an accurate, and explicit statement of their demands, we shall know how to answer them. In the mean time, we can only take the sense of those general expressions which they have used, and if any person can shew me a more obvious, or natural interpretation of them, than that which I have given, I am content to give up my argument.

If however, to this plain sense of their own declaration, there be yet wanting a corroborating proof of the extent of their plan, it will be found, beyond all possibility of doubt, in their violent and outrageous opposition to certain of their own community, who have come forward with opinions of a more moderate nature. The vehemence of their displeasure, and the fullness of their indignation, against the promulgators of these opinions, I am informed are excessive. They have consign'd, I am told, to the fury of the flames, a representation of the unfortunate nobleman, who headed, and have even met to agitate the deposition of a learned prelate of their own order, who assisted in promoting those obnoxious publications.

These

These are actions, which indicate, at least, a violent, and total dissent from the opinions thus advanced. The opinions published by my Lord Kenmare, and those who joined him, were I believe, contained only in a short address to his majesty, or to the chief governor of this kingdom. The address contained these three points. First, A profession of loyalty to the king, and attachment to the constitution. Secondly, A general declaration of a wish for the repeal of the penal laws. Thirdly, An expression of their content, that this repeal should take place gradually, according as the wisdom of the legislature might think fit to grant it, or as the exigencies of the times would permit.

To some one of these three points, or to the whole of them, this marked dissent must have been directed. From the first of them, I fancy, they would hardly be willing we should ascribe to them, a difference in opinion; indeed, they have expressed themselves otherwise. The second, is exactly the very foundation of their own declaration. It can, therefore, be only from the third position, containing the qualifications of time, and extent to their demands, which they dissent, and with so much violence dissent. It follows obviously, that they are entirely of a contrary opinion, since, marks of disapprobation so violent, could never be produced by a partial difference. They must therefore mean, that no qualifi-

cations of time or circumstances, ought to restrict their demands. That they will not be satisfied by a gradual extension of indulgences from the legislature, but that nothing less than an immediate and entire repeal of all the laws by which they are aggrieved as Roman Catholics, will entirely *content* them.

Having thus arrived at what I consider the meaning of the declaration, and endeavoured to ascertain the objects of the pursuits of the Roman Catholics, a very slight exposition of their immediate tendency, and a very brief statement of their necessary consequences, might, perhaps, be sufficient to shew to men of moderate and of reflecting minds, the prudence or imprudence of granting them. But, as the number of those, who fall under this description, is very small, I shall beg leave to suspend this, till I go a little farther into the question.

Having stated the demands of the Catholics, in order accurately to ascertain the propriety of them, it will be necessary to examine, first, their right to them, and secondly, the policy of allowing them. If they have an absolute right to demand them, there is an end to the question. If not, the question of policy comes then to be considered.

And

And here I am well aware, of the flood of common place declamation, which may be, and usually is, poured in upon the subject. I am aware, that the fashionable political language of the day, will not fail to be brought forward. I am aware, that, according to the doctrines of the newly invented speculative philosophy, the matter cannot admit of a doubt. One compact, sweeping, little syllogism is sufficient for the disciples of the Rights of Man.

All men are equal, and have equal rights with all men.

But, *The Roman Catholics are men.*

Ergo. *The Roman Catholics have equal rights with all men.*

This conclusion, it must be confessed, is accurately enough drawn from the premises, and drawn too, in the first figure of syllogisms, in which, according to the logicians, the *necessitas consequentiæ*, is by far the strongest. But, as I am unfortunate enough not to see the truth of the conclusion, it is my business to discover some falsity in one of the premises. For I am also aware of the rule, that *ex vero nihil sequitur nisi verum*.

This falsity I fancy, at least, I have found out in the major proposition, which to be true, requires, in my opinion,

opinion, the interposition of two or three words, and ought to be thus stated;

“ All men *in a state of nature* are equal, and have equal rights.”

If in order to preserve their conclusion, and square the syllogism with this amended major, the advocates of the Roman Catholic cause, think fit to alter the minor proposition also, and say, that “ the Roman Catholics are men in a state of nature ;” I am sure they are heartily welcome to the consequences of their doctrine. Let them enjoy the full and *equal rights of and with* men in a state of nature. But then let them not interfere with, or seek to participate in the Rights of Man, in civil society. How far this would make for their cause, it is not difficult to see. The Roman Catholics, would, I fancy, feel themselves little obliged to any champion of the Rights of Man, who should obtain for them a victory so ruinous.

Such must, inevitably, be the consequences of political arguments drawn not from the nature of man, as he is, but as he has been, or as it is fancied, he ought to be. The conclusions from such reasoning must be either inapplicable or repugnant to the real state of things. The error of the new system of politics

litics seems to lie in considering men, not according to their real nature, and their real interest resulting from their connexions with each other, but according to an imaginary dignity, an hypothetical virtue, which they were never known to possess. It founds government upon an argument of pride, not of convenience; in the compliments it pays to human nature, it overlooks the cautions necessary to establish its security. Whilst it is too solicitous in asserting the *rights* of men, it may naturally be expected to be somewhat inattentive to the restrictions necessary to prohibit *wrongs*.

The sum of what I have to say on this matter is this. In the present state of society to adduce arguments from a state of nature, is to take them from a wrong source. Till men be again reduced to that state, such arguments cannot apply. And I may say *almost* in the words said by one of the chiefs of this new system, on a different occasion: "There does not exist
 "in the compass of languages, an arrangement of words
 "to express so much as the means of effecting this.
 "The means must be an obliteration of human knowledge: and it has never yet been discovered how to
 "make man *unknow* his knowledge or *unthink* his
 "thoughts."

If

If it be objected, that I have not proved that the position *, "*That all men are equal, and have equal rights,*" is true only of men in a state of nature, I answer to this, let there be a single state in civil society pointed out, to which it can apply, and I give up the point.

But it is too plain to waste time upon, that whatever the Roman Catholics claim from government, they must claim as members of civil society; and of this particular society with its several relations to them of time, place, and circumstance, let us see then how far, under these qualifications, they have a *right* to demand these indulgences.

But I must here again confess, that I am not yet safe from the sweeping force of the new philosophy. If it be admitted, it is equally decisive here as in the former case. Indeed, I know not any argument that could stand against it. Men have no right to be bound by any laws to which they did not actually give their consent. The Roman Catholics never gave their consent to the penal laws. Therefore, they have no right to be bound by them. Here is another little syllogism,
not

* Vide Paine on the Rights of Man, in his Miscellaneous Chapter.

not quite so formal as the other, nor exactly in the same figure, but equally efficacious, and equally decisive of the point in question.

“Every age, and generation,” says Mr. Paine, “must be as free to act for itself, *in all cases*, as the ages and generations which preceded it.” “The parliament of 1688, *or of any other period*, had no more right to dispose of the people of the present day, or to bind or controul them *in any shape whatsoever*, than the parliament or people of the present day have to dispose of, bind, or controul those who are to live a hundred or a thousand years hence. Every generation is and must be competent to all the purposes which its occasions require.” †

Concerning this reasoning, I shall only for the present remark, that it applies equally against all establishments, and goes directly to prove that there ought to be no fixed government in any state. For if no generation be at all bound by the acts of any preceding one, no government could last beyond the lives of its constituent members. “This might do well enough, to use the words of an elegant writer, did one generation of men go off

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† Ditto, in the two or three first pages.

“the stage at once, and another succeed, as is the case
 “with silk-worms and butterflies. * But as, to continue the words of the same writer, “human society is
 “in perpetual flux, one man every hour going out of
 “the world, another coming into it, it is necessary, in
 “order to preserve *stability* in government, that the new
 “brood should conform themselves to the established
 “constitution, and nearly follow the path which their
 “fathers, treading in the footsteps of theirs, had marked
 “out to them.”

When, therefore, I hear it asserted, that an established and fixed government is *not* necessary for a state, it will be time enough to set about shewing the preposterous fallacy of the doctrine, which leads to such a conclusion.

But lest, in this philosophic age, I should be thought without any system, whereon to ground my opinion, I shall refer to an authority, which some years back satisfied the warmest advocates for liberty, and was considered the highest on the subject; but which, in the present enlightened day, will, I suppose, in common with every thing else of past times, be despised, as rude and barbarous.

* Vide, Hume's Essay on the Original Contract. 1st Vol. of his Essays, 483.

ous. It is that of Mr. Locke. Did my present purpose require it, indeed I could not desire a more ample refutation of the new principles of politics, than what a comparison of them with his essay on government would furnish.

His principles say, if I mistake them not, that when any set of men, have, by their own consent, united together in civil society, and established a body with power of making laws for them, the declaration of the public-will, belongs to that body alone, unless they violate the conditions of the original contract. That though no man can be subjected to any government without his own consent, yet such consent may be given tacitly, as well as expressly. And on this head, his words are;

“ And to this I say, that every man, who has any possession, or enjoyment, of any part of the dominions of any government, doth thereby give his *tacit consent*, and is as far forth obliged to obedience to the laws of that government, during such enjoyment, as any one under it, whether this his possession be of lands to him and his heirs for ever, or a lodging only for a week; or whether it be barely travelling freely on the highway; and in effect, it reaches as far as the very being of any one within the territories of that government.”*

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* Vide Locke's Essay on Government, p. 240.

To apply these principles to the case before us. The Roman Catholics, it must be allowed, fall within this description, of persons possessing property under our government. They therefore, according to this author, have given their consent, and are bound to obedience to the present government, and ought to obey the legislature as it exists, composed of king, lords and commons, in all matters of public concern. They can therefore have *no right* to dictate to, or command them. Their present application therefore, cannot be the demand of a right.

I know indeed, that, according to the same authority, where the legislature violates the original compact, and does that which exceeds the terms of its commission, it is said, to be no longer entitled to obedience. But I believe the Roman Catholics will hardly say, that the original infliction or even the subsequent continuance of the penal laws, was such a violation. The plain consequence is, that what they seek from the legislature, being a matter dependant on the will, and within the province of that legislature, it must be sued for as a *favour* and an *indulgence* on principles of equity, not demanded as a matter of *mere right*.

But it is plain the Catholics themselves do not consider their claims as matters of right. Their language, though bold, is still rather that of solicitation, than of demand.

demand.* They even, by declaring that their exertions shall be *consistent with their duty to the civil magistrate*, acknowledge their obligation of submission to the magistrate, and, of course, to the government constituting him. They cannot therefore, demand as a right, principles which go to the infringement of that government.

Having thus endeavoured to prove that the object of the † application of the Catholics, cannot be considered as a matter which they have *a right to demand*, it follows,
that

* It may be proper in this place to inform the reader that this publication was intended, and, but for an accident, would have appeared much sooner. Since the writing of it, the language of the Catholics has, it must be confessed, assumed an higher tone, and their claims have been advanced with less disguise. This swelling, and already almost menacing spirit which they have lately betrayed, cannot fail to shew us, however, what we must inevitably expect from the success of their applications.

† If notwithstanding this, it should yet be said that, though this is a question, which undoubtedly belongs to the legislature, and of which the determination *formally* lies with them, yet the legislature itself is bound by the obligations of natural justice; and that the claims of the Catholics are founded on this, I answer to this; first, this is taking for granted the very point in question, that their claims are founded in justice. Secondly, It is still recurring to the state of nature, and will in fact, if allowed, prove too much. For exactly on the same principles, they may demand as their right, any thing
whatsoever,

that it can only be sued for as an *indulgence*, which it is in the power of the legislature either to grant or to withhold.

In this point of view, their case, to use a legal phrase, must stand upon its *equity*, and its merits, and it only remains to consider how far it may be *politic* or for the general interest of the state, to allow their suit. If the Catholics shew themselves deserving of these indulgences, I will freely admit, that nothing less than weighty reasons of policy, and of public advantage, ought to operate to their refusal. But to pursue my legal allusion, *the onus probandi*, lies upon them. Those who appeal to equity, must shew themselves entitled to equity. Upon this ground indeed, I fancy, the Catholics think themselves invincible. It is, I shall readily allow by far their strongest, and, had it not been for their own infatuated intemperance, might have been capable of answering most of their purposes. But they have passed all bounds of discretion and of decency, and the failure
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whatsoever, which they themselves think founded on natural justice; and then they may as well say at once, that to be bound by our present constitution at all, is contrary to natural justice, since it excludes them; and so they have a right to overturn it altogether. I fancy it would bring this point to a short issue, if those who assert the Right of the Catholics to these matters, were to be desired to prove it.

of their projects will be owing to the extravagance of their folly. But it will not be fair to dismiss their cause without a hearing.

Their reasoning, as well in their authorized publications, as in the conversations of their best informed individuals, is I believe, nearly as follows.

"The present enlightened period of society, producing every where sentiments of enlarging philosophy, and ripening principles of general liberality, peculiarly calls on the Roman Catholics to exert themselves. At the same time that it affords them an opportunity the most favourable, it reproaches them for their criminal supineness. This supineness may even be construed into an acquiescence to their present situation, and an acknowledgment of the peace and comfort they enjoy under the present government. It is their business to contradict such an interpretation. It is their business to proclaim the grievances which the government inflicts upon them, and to call aloud for their repeal. They claim to themselves a merit for bringing them forward at a time, when no other source of disquiet exists to interrupt the public tranquillity. Their grievances, it would be too tedious, too disgusting to enumerate. Independent of petty restrictions in the education of their children and other matters, their principal suffering lies in their entire exclusion from all legislative,

gislative, all executive, all judicial power. These are in hands independant of them. They have no power, no controul over power, they are excluded from all offices of trust and of emolument. The octennial harvest, so fruitful to their Protestant brethren, returns but to disturb them by a tantalizing ostentation of sweets in which they cannot partake. It remains to ask what reasons can justify the cruelty of these restrictions? They were imposed in days of barbarism. They should be dispelled by the splendour of this enlightened age. The causes of their imposition no longer exist. The Roman Catholics are loyal. Their past conduct has shewn them so. Can it be thought, that when they get more power, they will be less temperate? They offer a proof of their moderation more unequivocal than a volume of abjurations; *they wish to be free, and will endeavour to be united.* This union cannot be injurious to the Protestants. The Catholics seek but a *share* of power. Their numbers ought to be an inducement to their obtaining their wishes. The property which *some* of them possess, is a pledge for the good conduct *of all*. In fine, it is for the interest of the Protestants themselves to grant them their demands. It will tend to the *union* of the kingdom, by *dividing* the power. This will promote the general happiness: It will, serve the interests of all ranks. It will serve the great by tranquillizing the country, and opening new sources to industrious intrigue. It will impart

new importance to the sentiments of the middle and inferior rank, by raising to a participation those who have hitherto lain in obscurity.

What I have stated, it must be obviously remarked, pursues as nearly as possible the words of their own declaration, and contains, I believe, all the arguments used by them.

Every thing in this applicable to the equity of their demands, will be found reducible to three points. 1st. They claim the natural rights of men. 2dly. There is no reason why these rights should now be withholden from them, for the causes of the infliction of their disabilities have ceased, and they have shewn themselves deserving of every indulgence. 3dly. To this indulgence, the numbers of the sufferers is an additional equitable inducement.

Of the rights of man, I hope, I have already said enough. As to the numbers of the sufferers, it is clearly but a collateral and a dependant consideration. If their case be not good in its merits, no strength of numbers can make it so. And, I hope, it is not intended to rest the matter on an argument of force: if it be, it must be answered in kind. But till I hear it asserted that number and justice are synonymous terms, I shall follow the old way of estimating the rectitude of the former, by the principles of the latter. The whole then of this ar-

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gument rests on the second point, and resolves itself into this question: Have we fair and rational grounds to think that the causes of the penal laws are entirely done away, and that no necessity whatever for any of them, any longer exists?

It might, perhaps, be of some service to the violence of these claimants, to look a little deeper into the history and origin of these penal laws. It is not my purpose, nor is it necessary, to enter into a detail of all the bloody butcheries of religion, with which the history of this and of the sister kingdom abound. They are open to those, who have any taste for this kind of reading. But to all who wish to guard against a repetition of such tragedies, it cannot be useless to take a general retrospection of them. For the consideration of the penal laws, it is even necessary. The contemplation of the cause will enable us to judge better of the effects, and will shew us more clearly how far the decay of the one will warrant the remission of the other.

The history of England and of this country as connected with it, in times, it must be confessed, much less enlightened than the present, shews us to what fatal and inhuman excesses a misguided spirit of devotion, may carry men. For a series of unhappy years, we see these kingdoms ravaged and distracted by the rage of contend-
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ing religions. Each party, according as the arm of chance or of force, raised it to the ascendancy, abus'd and stigmatised its power. Persecutions, confiscations, massacres pursued the wretched fallen. On either hand, the unhappy kingdom was a victim. Bandied about between opposing factions, it saw before its eyes but the melancholy prospect of an alternation of destruction.

A lengthened series of ravages like these, could not but furnish to the final conquerors, a lesson of instruction, a lesson too, whose remembrance ought to be lasting, as its impression must have been violent. It could not but shew to the party who had ultimately established itself, the necessity of securing the establishment. Self defence required it. The repose, the well being of their exagitated country called for it. The means of securing the established constitution could be effectually found only in the disabling of its declared enemies. Disabilities therefore and restrictions were, for this purpose, imposed, and penalties denounced for the security of their observance.

Here we have the origin of the penal laws. The barbarities which gave rise to them, must undoubtedly excite our horror and disgust. But in the infliction of the laws themselves, we find cause of regret, rather than of censure. They appear to have been the melancholy re-

sult of an indispensable necessity ; and if we do condemn (and surely, we cannot too much condemn) it ought to be the fatal spirit which was the cause, not the cautionary policy, which was the necessary effect.

Has this cause then, entirely ceased ? And may we, consequently, entirely remove the effects ? What proof have we of this ? What *proof* have we that the Roman Catholics have relinquished that spirit of bigotry, all those obnoxious principles of their religion, which formerly made them such inveterate foes to our establishment ? We know, that *formerly*, it was a fundamental tenet of their church that the supreme power was in a person entirely foreign to this realm, and that implicit obedience was due to this power. We know even that their devoted faith in the infallibility of this person was carried so far, as to persuade them that no oath or obligation from which his holiness thought proper to release them, could be binding on their consciences. We know that by the healing power of this panacean absolution, the rankest frauds or murders might be cured.

We know too that *formerly*, it was of the very essence of their religion, to consider itself as the only road to salvation, and to abhor and execrate every other system, as impious and heretical. We know that, according to these principles, it must necessarily have been, not only considered

considered as a duty to convert others to their religion, but also as an impiety to acquiesce in, or if possible, to permit any other. We know also that *formerly* their blind devotion to their pastors, rendered them the ready and the servile tools to every scheme of pious fraud, or intriguing priestcraft. We know that these, and many others of their tenets *did* render them dangerous and seditious subjects of this government, and we have more than once, in *former times*, experienced the fatal effects of their actual operation*.

All this experience, (experience, God knows, dearly bought,) requires surely, something weighty to counteract it. Some reasonable ground of assurance ought to be laid before us, to shew, that if we grant the power, we shall not have similar scenes acted before us.

But the Roman Catholics of the present day, it is said, are more enlightened. They have renounced all
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* The review of these transactions ought to furnish a lesson of moderation to both parties. To the protestants it ought, and I will venture to assert, it does shew, the propriety of remitting these restrictions, according as the spirit of former superstition decays. But is there nothing to be conceded on the other hand? Is there no allowance to be made for past experience? None for long possession, which ever renders men unwilling to part with it? Are the protestants,

the bigotry, all the superstition of their ancestors, every principle in short, which can prevent them from being good and loyal subjects of this realm.

What proof have we of this? I can find none but their own word.* This, with some of them, might perhaps be sufficient. There are amongst them, I allow, men of as high honour, and as extended a liberality, as any of any religion or country. Some such I myself know.

testants to give up all to the present time, to be allowed nothing for the *effects* of the past? Are the Roman Catholics to reap all the advantages of the present enlightened day, to bear no part of the *effects* of the past. In the chain of society, men must be influenced by their connexion with past as well as present times. It is this ill-judged attempt to insulate, as it were the present opinions and times, to tear them from their connexion with the past, this *untimely* recurrence to abstract and primitive principles, this total disregard to experience, this eracination of *every thing* fixed and established, which has, in a neighbouring country, converted a desirable reformation into a deformed anarchic revolution, which rendered that country for some time a sport to the most wretched of the rabble, and which now leaves it trembling in the balance of uncertainty, and expecting what new convulsions it must undergo, to render it a finished example to the rest of the world.

* Many of the most obnoxious and absurd principles of this religion, have I know fallen into disuse with the most rational part of their community. But who can tell, how far *the spirit* of it may yet exist?

know. But it is impossible the majority of any description of men can be such. What security have we for them then? In all their declarations, in all their arguments, I can find nothing positive, except their own assurances of their loyalty and moderation.

But their peaceable conduct for several years past they say, is a proof of their good intentions. To this conduct of theirs, I am willing to allow every share of praise. But this at best, is but a *negative* proof. Besides, who can tell what difference being possessed of power might make? We all know the change this usually produces in the minds of men. The less it is in the power of any one to resist, certainly the easier it is to submit. Perhaps, many of those very persons who now, and with sincerity too, profess their moderate intentions, might find their sentiments alter with their situation, and their views enlarge with their means. Certain it is, that the argument from experience, *take it altogether*, is by no means favourable to them.

But it will still be insisted, perhaps, that the *liberality of the present times*, will ensure us against any danger of a repetition of former persecutions. For God's sake, what is the meaning of this senseless jargon of *light and liberality*, which is every where obtruded on our ears?

Formerly,

Formerly, the meaning of these words was thought to be pretty generally understood. The exercise of these virtues too, in the *rational* sense in which they were then conceived, was considered by every good man as a duty. But what are we to understand by this inundation of *new light* and *liberality*, which every legislating barber, and cobbler, pours in upon us so copiously at every turn? Has it any meaning at all? or how are we to discover it? It is easy to talk for ever in general terms of abstraction, without a possibility of detection. For my part, I confess I have no idea of any *virtue*, which is to be exercised at the expence of all reason and prudence. Reduce this bombast of liberality to reality, and apply it to facts. In what sense has it been used of late? Either by ambitious knaves, as a cloak for their mad projects of sedition, or by credulous men of good intentions, who were deceived into the adoption of an *abstract* doctrine, which was never yet found reducible to practice. Are we then to risk our all, upon the plausibility of this chimera? The Catholics are treating us as the fox did the crow in the fable. And if we suffer their imposing flattery to prevail on us, we shall, I fear, like the crow, lament the loss of our meat in vain.

But, it is said, the Catholics will take an oath of allegiance to the king, and of attachment to the constitution. And that this is surely a sufficient security. But we all
know

know how easy it would be to effect their purpose, without an exact violation of their oath. If they are once admitted to a participation of privileges, it will not be a matter of difficulty, to encroach upon the crown with perfect loyalty, and to subvert the constitution under its own forms. *At all events, should the Roman Catholics, who compose a considerable majority of the nation, aim at *equal* privileges, and of course, at the legislature, it is clear that obedience to the constitution, will then be obedience to their own will. For the will of the majority, is that of the whole. And that their plan does not in the least fall short of this, I think I shall shew.

There is another *kind* of argument used by them to shew that nothing need be apprehended from them. It is that *many* of them are possessed of property, which they would not risk by favouring any innovation. Not to dwell on the extreme weakness of this tie, which we see men every day break through to gratify any darling passion, it can, at any rate, apply but to a *very inconsiderable* part of their community.

I have now taken notice, I think, of every thing like an argument or proof used by them, to shew themselves

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deserving

* Such an oath is at present taken by every member of the legislature, yet we see every day, oppositions and encroachments of each part against the other. The plea of *bettering the constitution* is a never failing one, for all cases of innovation.

deserving of the indulgencies sought for, and that we need have no apprehensions in granting them. If there be any other, let it be shewn. Amongst all these, I can find nothing, on a scrutiny, which comes home to the point, and which applies to them all, except their own word, their own assurances. These may be very binding and very strong. But to trust *any set of men whatsoever* with precarious power, and in defiance too of such experience, on the bare strength of these, would be little less than mere madness.

Were I therefore to follow the strict rules of justice, I should be content to stop here, and say that since, on *their own shewing*, the Roman Catholics have not *proved* themselves equitably entitled to the indulgencies they seek for, their sect should be refused.

But I shall go farther. I shall in my turn, take up the *onus probandi*, and endeavour to shew that they are unworthy of the indulgencies they require, and *that according to their own principles, it would endanger our established constitution*, to allow them. As their argument for themselves, rests principally on the strength of their own assurances, I shall also take *the words of their own declaration*, to prove my position against them, and shall endeavour

endeavour to strengthen it by comparing it with their present, not their past conduct.

In the beginning of these observations, I endeavoured to ascertain by the plainest interpretation I could give to the words of their declaration, what the objects of their applications were, and how much they comprehended. A very little more, will, I believe, be necessary, to shew the full extent of their pursuits, and the inevitable consequences of their engagements.

They have bound themselves, I have shewn by their compact, and incorporation, to use every endeavour to *procure the repeal of all the laws by which they are aggrieved as Roman Catholics.* These laws I have divided into four heads.

Concerning the three first, comprehending the various prohibitions by which they are restricted or obstructed in educating their children, in the free exercise of their religion, and in the full power of acquiring every species of property: concerning all these I say, there will, I believe, be but little dispute *on principles.* It is impossible any man, even of *common* liberality, or of *common* feeling, can read this black list of penalties and prohibitions without a sensation of disgust. The policy which gave rise to them must excite our sorrow, and the means of discontinuing

them with prudence, must be sincerely wished for.

* The candour of the Catholics must allow that they have for many years back; been either gradually repealed or have fallen into entire disuse. The effect has still been correspondent to its cause. In proportion as the bigotry of the Catholics has died away, so has the force of the laws against them been remitted. Had they possessed but the common prudence of suffering this cause and effect to take its natural course; had they, moderately and calmly, endeavoured to take a gradual advantage of the gradual melioration of public sentiment, I will venture to assert that a very few years would have left scarcely one

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* I have not in the course of these observations taken any notice of the manifest want of common candour, which pervades all the arguments of the Roman Catholics on this business. A stranger to read their statement of grievances, would think, what indeed, they themselves say almost in express terms, that they are in a state of perfect slavery. But were the advantages of protection, security and peace which they enjoy under our government to be enumerated, it might perhaps, with temperate men, excite a doubt, whether, if they were wise, they have not good reason to be satisfied with their present state of tranquillity; and whether the extension of privileges which they seek for, could answer any purposes, but those of ambition. But on this, I place no reliance. I mention it, but to shew the unfairness of their statements. All their grievances they have enumerated. All their enjoyments they have suppressed: I have done the same. Which has acted with the greatest candour,

of those obnoxious laws upon our books. I will even go so far as to say, that there is not a single Protestant, of a commonly enlarged mind, who would have opposed their abolition.

But by the prematurity of their confessions, by the inordinacy of their demands they have ruined all. For my own part, I claim no superiority of *illumination*. But I will be bold to assert, that in compassion for *real* suffering, in allowance of every *just* right of nature or of society, I will not yield to the veriest blusterer of the rights of man. But I can see clearly, and will contend for it, that there may be motives of general policy and prudence, which, in a state, would be sufficient to counterbalance and restrict many of the *natural* rights of individuals. And I say the declaration of the Catholic society furnishes us with such motives for the refusal of their demands,

The fourth head of disabilities of which they have declared their determined endeavours to procure the repeal, I have stated to consist of those by which they are excluded from all public offices. It is plain that this is the point which is the bugbear. It is in this respect, their grievances are so galling. The other points they scarcely touch upon. It is on this score they dwell. "*The whole legislative, executive, and judicial power, say they, is in other hands. They have the form of election, without its advantages.*"

advantages. They have no power, no controul over power." On this head however, we shall not, I believe, find it quite so easy to agree, even on principle. It goes, if I conceive it rightly, to an *entire subversion of our established constitution.*

Our established constitution consists, I think, summarily, of an hereditary crown of the Protestant Religion, of an hereditary nobility of the Protestant Religion, and of an elective house of commons of the Protestant Religion. The electors of the latter are certain persons of the Protestant Religion, under certain qualifications. These form the legislative body. The executive, besides the crown, consists of the various officers appointed or promoted by it, as the administrators of justice, the officers of the army and navy, the officers of the different branches of the revenue, add to those, the sheriffs, justices of peace, and other officers of counties, cities or corporations, whether elected or appointed, all necessarily of the Protestant Religion.

All these, together with the professions of the law in general, of physic, and of a church establishment, cementing and pervading the whole: all these being appropriated to those of the Protestant Religion alone, must in proportion to their respective importance, be so many sources of *grievances* to the Roman Catholics. Now,

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by their obligation to each other, they are bound to labour *the repeal of the laws by which they are aggrieved as Roman Catholics.*

Do not the laws by which they are excluded from the professions and employments I have enumerated, *aggrieve them as Roman Catholics?* Undoubtedly. They are bound therefore to promote the repeal of them. Does not the law, which prohibits them from voting at elections equally with protestants, *aggrieve them as Roman Catholics?* Certainly. Does not the law, which prohibits them from being elected members of the house of commons, *aggrieve them as Roman Catholics?* It cannot be denied. Does not the law, which prohibits them from sitting and voting in the house of peers, equally *aggrieve them as Roman Catholics?* It does. Does not even the law which settles the crown in a *Protestant* succession, remotely *aggrieve them as Roman Catholics?* It does, or it may do so. Do not, in fine, the various laws, by which they are obliged to contribute to the support of all these establishments of church and state, from which they are excluded, *aggrieve them as Roman Catholics?* It cannot be denied that they do. Of all these, therefore, by their own declaration, they are bound to endeavour to procure the repeal. Now these comprehending the whole of our established constitution, it follows strictly, that
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the whole of our established constitution is within the scope of their intended abolition.

If it be objected, that I have taken their words with too logical a nicety, too captiously; I answer, it is at least the obvious meaning of their *words*, and if it be not the meaning of *their intention*, it is their business, by accurately defining and limiting their demands, to put it out of any one's power to understand them. This surely, would be no very difficult thing to do, if they understand themselves, and their not having done it, *might* give rise to some suspicion. It *might* be thought that they perceived that a fair statement of every thing they aimed at, would not be likely to favour their success.

But even, independent of their express declaration, I can conceive it to be *natural* enough, (for the present, is no time for concealment,) that they should be affected, as that indicates. It has often been said, that there is a principle in their religion, which as I mentioned before, by persuading them it is, if not the only good one, at least by far the best, naturally leads them to give the preference to the members of it, above all other persons; and makes them *wish* at least, that they were the best established. But I will not take advantage of their opinion, general as it is. I argue from human nature in general.

neral. It is natural for any particular description of men, especially religious descriptions, to favour each other more than strangers.

Should the Catholics therefore, ever obtain *equal* privileges, the transition to the making them *exclusive*, could not, *according to this principle of nature*, be very unlikely. And as they are a majority, the means of effecting this could not be wanting. Suppose them but equally possessed of votes at elections; *it is natural*, that the majority of the members returned should be of their own persuasion. And how well, or how long a Roman Catholic house of commons, (for so it might then be called,) would coalesce or agree with a Protestant house of peers, or a Protestant crown, it would be hard for any one to determine. But I think, it would not be *very unnatural* for them, having got so far, to endeavour to do away the distinctions which still remained operative against them: and this could only be effected either by making themselves equally entitled, and thus setting aside any exclusive establishment of religion, or if there were any suffered to exist, by making it their own. So that here again I come to the same conclusion, and it must be remarked, that I have here given them a great deal more than their words deserve*.

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* What has been said, if it be just, obviously brings to this triple alternative. Shall we keep our present establishment of religion and government?

But all these apprehensions, it may be said, can be removed by extending to the Roman Catholics, a partial and gradual indulgence. This is the argument of the most rational of their advocates. In a spirited, little production * it is used with much reason and judgment. I know that much *might* be said on this score. I even confess, that I think it contains the propriety of the case of the Catholics. Certain I am, that whatever may be allowed them, ought in policy to be so gradually granted, that it may neither intoxicate the party admitted, nor excite to tumultuous discontent the party already established; the two evils which are most to be apprehended in the extension of their privileges.† But this is not at all the present question.

government? Or shall we have no establishment at all? Or shall we suffer that of the Catholics to become so? One or the other of these, we must adopt.

† Signed a Northern Whig.

† It is implied in the production just alluded to, and expressly asserted in the Catholic declaration, that it would be for the interest of the kingdom, to grant their demands: for that it would produce unanimity and tranquillity in the country. I should be glad to know, in what probable way they can establish this position. For I find nothing but an assertion for it. I am the more surprized to find it used as an argument for their cause, as I had always conceived it furnished a principal one against it. Certain am, that the extravagant

The Catholics themselves have entirely excluded it individually; I know they laugh at the idea of any partial concessions. Their declaration goes far beyond any such; their conduct shews they would not be content with less than all. Were we to take their own words, indeed, we should have reason to dread any, even the most gradual extension of their privileges. For they clearly say that whatever they gain, will be used as an instrument for still further acquisitions. They pledge themselves to *use all the influence, which it shall be possible for them at any time to exert*, to obtain their ends. Whatever therefore they get *at any time*, must be used as the means of getting more.

I know they use the word legal influence, they declare that their endeavours shall be *consistent with their duty to the civil magistrates*. But this qualification is a mere nullity. Their duty to the civil magistrate is obedience to him, and of course to the government. The only endeavour they can use therefore, consistently with this

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duty,

gant conduct of the Catholics of late, has given a general alarm to all the Protestant interest. How this alarm would be quieted, or the minds of the people rendered more tranquil by the actual compliance with these demands, I am yet to be informed. For my part, I should naturally think such a step would rather increase their dissatisfaction, and thus promote enmity and disunion between the different parties, and of course in the kingdom.

duty, are those of intreaty and petition. But those leave the determination of the matter entirely in the breast of the civil magistrate, or the government. That they would long remain satisfied with such endeavours as these it is not easy to imagine.

But we are not left to conjecture for this. Their behaviour of late, shews pretty unequivocally, that they would not. They have already, if not entirely, at least all but a few, broken through this restriction. For I am somewhat at a loss, I confess, to reconcile their numerous meetings, their published manifestoes, their assumed censorship over the opinions of others, with their strict *duty to the civil magistrate*.

Certain I am, at any rate, that these proceedings, tumultuous and irregular as they have been, are no proof of their moderate intentions, nor any inducement to the indulgence of their suit. It is vain that they plume themselves on referring to their amicable conduct for some years back, whilst the outrageous indecency of their present proceedings, so entirely annihilates the effect of it. They fancy us, I suppose, purblind. They fancy us of that decayed or distempered state of vision, that whilst it suffers us to distinguish distant objects, renders obscure or imperceptible those which
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are immediately before us. But I hope, we are not so weak fought as they would make us.

It is impossible to be blind to what stares us so palpably in the face. It is impossible, that when we see any set of men in no capacity acknowledged by our laws, constituting themselves into a kind of incorporation unauthorized also by those laws: when we see this incorporation openly pursuing objects, at least, *infringing* upon the established constitution, and pursuing them, not with temper and submission, as only it would become those who ask a favour, not a right, but with violent heat, and perturbed animosity; when we see this self-appointed body assuming to itself a right of public adjudication, and in the imperious tone of arrogated legislation, proclaiming their inveterate dissent from the more moderate petitions of certain of their own persuasion, and denouncing the terrors of their condemnation against the promoters of those petitions: it is impossible, I say, when we see all this *arrogation* of power, corporate, legislative, and judicial, by men *unknown to our laws*, not to see the intemperance, the *illegality* of their conduct. It is impossible to think that those who are so indecently premature in the assumption, should be discreet or moderate in the actual enjoyment of power. It is impossible to think that those who have gone so far whilst they have nothing, would stop short when they had

had acquired something, or at least, whilst any thing remained to be acquired. In fine, it is impossible, from the declaration, or present conduct of the Catholics themselves, that common prudence, or common concern for the welfare of the kingdom, can *favour* their cause.

I have now gone through my projected plan. It will be recollected that I set out with only professing, in some sort, to methodize, and put in issue, the real point in question between the Protestants and Roman Catholics. For this purpose, I first endeavoured, as well as I could, to ascertain the nature and extent of the demands of the Catholics, and this by the fairest interpretation of their own declaration. I next attempted to shew that these demands could not be considered as matters of *right*, to which they were absolutely entitled, but as matters of *indulgence*, which were discretionary in the legislature. And lastly, in considering the prudence and policy of granting them, I have endeavoured to prove chiefly *on their own declaration, and their own conduct*, that the ultimate object of their demands, in which they are bound to persevere, is *entirely inconsistent with our present established constitution*.

If this attempt should appear to have brought the question to its true point, my end is obtained. How far it
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may be proper, under this consideration, to comply with their demands, it is not for me, or any individual to determine.

From all that I have said, it is obvious, I meant to except a certain part of the Roman Catholic body, who differ from the rest in the extent and manner of their application. If the conclusions I have drawn in regard to the majority of the body at large, should still be thought to wrong them, I trust, it will be allowed me, that I have not, in the course of my argument, *assumed any thing*, and, have even almost entirely grounded myself on the obvious import of their own words and actions.

But I can sincerely assert, that if I shall have cause to find I have been wrong, I shall be far from sorry. I should be one of the last, who would wish to withhold from the Catholics, any natural rights or privileges which the welfare of our government would allow to be extended to them. And I declare that if the wisdom of the legislature shall think fit to grant any, or whatever indulgencies to them, consistently with the general good, I, as an individual, shall rejoice.

A PROTESTANT.

Dublin, Jan. 10th. 1792.



